

THE Christian History ;

Containing Accounts of the Propagation and Revival
of Religion in *England Scotland and America.*

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Saturday OCTOBER 15. 1743. § N<sup>o</sup>. 33.  
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The Account of the late Revival of Religion at Elizabeth-Town finished.

WE had no Instances among us of such *sudden Conversions* as I have heard of elsewhere ; but *our new Converts* were all for a *considerable Time* under a *Law-Work*, before they were brought to any *satisfying Views* of their Interest in **CHRIST** and the Favour of **GOD**. Nor had we *many Instances* of those *extatick rapturous Joys*, that were so frequent in some other Places.

It was remarkable that they who were formerly *eminent for Religion*, were now *greatly quickned* and revived ; and some of them had now *such joyful Manifestations* of **GOD's Love** to their Souls, as they had never before experienced.

It was also remarkable, that as this Work began among us in a Time of *greatest Health and Prosperity* ; so the Concern began sensibly to wear off in one of the *greatest Mortalities* that had ever been known in the Town ; which makes it appear more evidently to be *the Work* of **GOD** himself.

Tho' there are some of those who were then under special *Convictions*, that have worn off their Impressions, and are become secure and careless ; yet I don't know of any two Persons, who gave reasonable Hopes of a *real Change* at that Time, but what have hitherto by their Conversation *confirm'd* our Hopes of their saving Conversion to **GOD**.

I would be very cautious of any confident Determinations, with Respect to the *Conversion* of particular Persons : but if we may judge the *Tree* by the *Fruits*, which we have now had so long a Time to observe, we have Reason to suppose, that near about *sixty Persons* have received a *saving Change* in this

Congregation only, (and a Number in the Parish next adjoining to us, tho' I dare not pretend to guess how many) since the Beginning of this Work.

The *general Concern* which (as I have observed) appeared upon the Face of the Congregation, has gradually worn off; and a great Part of those who came short of the effectual and saving Influences of the blessed SPIRIT, are return'd to their former Security and Insensibility, and again appear like a Valley of dry Bones. Though there be yet a *considerable Number*, that don't give satisfying Evidences of a regenerate State, who have not worn off their serious Impressions.

I entreat your Prayers for us, that he with whom is the *Residue* of the SPIRIT, would *again revive* his Work among us; and have Compassion upon the many poor Souls who are yet in the Paths of Destruction and Death. And be pleased particularly to remember at the Throne of Grace

*Your most affectionate
humble Servant*

JONATHAN DICKINSON.

N. B. The preceeding NARRATIVE came inclosed in a Letter to the Rev. Mr. Foxcroft; in which are the following Passages,

"I was exceedingly gratified by the DECLARATION of your LAST CONVENTION of Ministers in BOSTON: and have Reason to praise GOD, that there are such a Number yet among you who are willing to give HIM the Glory of his special Grace so eminently display'd of late.

According to your Desire I have herewith sent you a *general Narrative* of the late Revival of Religion with us; in which I have endeavour'd to be *scrupulously careful*."

J. D.

It is not to be expected that, in publishing the Accounts successively sent us of the Revival of Religion in various Parts, we should observe so exact an Order with Respect either to Time or Place, as if we had them all before us at the Beginning: The Inconvenience of which we hope in some Measure to remove by the *Index* we shall give at the Close of the Year.

The following is a general History of the Revival of Religion (in the Summer 1741, and since that Time) at HALLIFAX, in the County of Plimouth, about 35 Miles to the Eastward of the South from Boston, drawn up by the Rev. Mr. COTTON, Pastor of the Church in that Town, and sent in a Letter to the Rev. Mr. Prince.

Rev. Sir,

HALLIFAX July 26. 1743.

ACcording to your Desire, I send you the following Account of the *State of Religion* among us. I am under some Disadvantage as to this, not having kept Minutes by me, as some others have done; therefore my Account must be more general than otherwise it might have been.

The Town of *Hallifax* contains to the Number of near 70 Families, and has been a Township about nine Years: The People in general have been a *sober* Sort of People; Tavern-haunting, Swearing, and such like Vices have never prevailed among them to *such a Degree* as in many other Places. --- But the *common Indifference and Lukewarmness* in Religion have had too much the Ascendant. In the Summer 1741, there were many Rumours among us from distant Parts respecting Religion, some good, some bad, by which we were set upon a Gaze, and knew not what to think: These Reports were so blended together, that we were filled with Concern what would be the Event of Things. In short, the Reformation appear'd like a Dream to us, we could not realize it; it seem'd as if some strange Thing had happened. However, I did not fill my Pulpit with the Cry of *Disorder*, Confusion, Trances, Visions, Exhorters &c. But tho't it more *rational* to suspend my Judgment till I had Opportunity of seeing for my self.

In *August* towards the latter End, we kept a Day of *Fasting* and *Prayer*, to ask the Influences of the SPIRIT, and to implore his gracious Presence among us. In the beginning of *November*, the Rev. Mr. *Wheelock* of *Lebanon* came to *Bridge-water*, which is bordering upon us, and there preach'd several Sermons, which were set home *with Power* on the Souls of the Hearers; many were prick'd at the Heart, some in the time of hearing, and some thro' after-Recollection as they were going home &c. Of which no doubt some of the Reverend Ministers of *Bridge-water* will give you a particular Account. I heard him preach three Times there, and several of my People, I think about *forty* or *fifty*, had the Opportunity of hearing him, once or twice.-- For my Part, I never saw such a

solemn Time in my Life ; King JESUS seem'd to ride in Triumph ; Concern appear'd in almost every Countenance ; Tears gush'd from many Eyes ; some were quite overcome with a Sense of Guilt, and all seem'd to be alive in the Worship of GOD : My Doubts and Scruples respecting the Work *vanish'd* ; and I was obliged by incontestible Evidence to say, *that this must needs be the Finger of GOD*. Not only my self, but almost all my People present, were *fully satisfied* with what they heard and saw ; they were *convinced* that it was GOD's *Doing*, and it was marvellous in their Eyes : and they bro't home such a Report as gave a wonderful Turn to the Course of Things among us : The Sentiments & Tho'ts of People in the Town, seem'd to be alter'd as it were at once : The evil Reports soon lost Ground, they were banish'd and chas'd away, except in a few, as Bats before the Light of the Sun. Some few of the Hearers present (who were mostly Communicants) return'd home under *strong Convictions* ; some of whom declared it at first, and others of them kept it to themselves as long as they could : But after some time they could not help speaking too, & declaring their deplorable Case. The Discourse of these in a *private Way* was very moving & affecting, and was I think one of the *greatest Means* under GOD of spreading the Concern thro' the Town ; tho' *not exclusively* of other Instituted Means ; they all *concurr'd* in producing this astonishing Effect. Religion was the Discourse in every Company, the Concern was almost *general*, and that Inquiry seem'd to be in *every* ones Mouth, *What shall I do to be saved ?* About the middle of *November* the young People set up *religious Meetings* with Advice, in several Parts of the Town ; there being no such Meetings before this ; and almost all of them both Male and Female attended them : and even *little Children* of about *nine, ten or twelve Years* of Age set up a Meeting of their own Accord. * And all Frolicking and Carousing, and merry

* When I heard of this voluntary and unexpected Meeting, I was under Concern lest they by their Mismanagement should open the Mouths of People ; but I was quickly better satisfied by the Accounts of some who overheard them ; they behaved with a great deal of Seriousness and Regularity, and the Manner of their Performances was beyond what could be expected from such *Children*.

Meetings were laid aside : Foolish Talking and Jestings seem'd terrible to the *young* People ; they could not endure it ; they desir'd to hear nothing but what was *serious* and solemn ; they took more Delight in going to a Meeting than ever they did to a Frolick. But this religious Turn was *not confin'd* to these alone, tho' it appear'd more in them at first ; but Persons of *all Ages* have been affected in a greater or lesser Degree, in the Process of this Work.

November 27. Friday, There was a private Meeting at my House in the Evening, at which Time after Prayers &c. I read to them Mr. EDWARDS's *Narrative*. After the Service was over, one that had been Mr. *Wheelock's* Hearers cry'd out in great Distress, which was the first Instance of any crying out among us. This Person when at *Bridgewater* was very much *disgusted* with a Person's crying out under Soul Concern near her, and Mr. *Wheelock's* Performances did not appear to her as they did to others ; she had this Thought while hearing him, as she declared in her Distress, " Ah you are an Hypocrite, & you will be discover'd within this Twelve-month." But however she was not easy in her Mind upon her Return ; she could not rest contented in the Condition she was in ; a Concern seiz'd her Soul, which kept encreasing till this Time : And now her Sins stare her in the Face ; she trembled under a Sense of Guilt, particularly because of the Sin of *Unbelief* and the *Hardness* of her Heart ; she said " That she was the Hypocrite, and that every Body was better than she" ; and she appear'd under awful Apprehensions lest she should be left to grieve the SPIRIT of GOD, and that he would depart from her, as he justly might. I and some others observed her *narrowly*, and discoursed with her during her Distress ; and it was evident to us that she could as soon have made a World, as have help'd manifesting her Trouble in the Manner she did. After about an Hour she was something more compos'd, tho' weak ; she then sat in her Chair and made a pertinent pathetic Prayer ; she had but little Rest that Night ; the *next Day* she appear'd very melancholy, her Trouble continuing tho' in a lesser Degree. On the *Sabbath* she went to Meeting with an eager Desire of hearing ; in the Afternoon her Distress return'd upon her with a redoubled Force ; this Tho't pierced her Soul, " How in that Place she had dishonour'd CHRIST " by receiving the *Sacrament* unworthily" ; she was affected to such a Degree as to overcome her bodily Strength, and she cry'd

cry'd out in the Bitterness of her Soul ; and now and-then she had Power to utter herself. This Scene was *very affecting* to the Congregation ; and some that were under great Concern before, and were as full as they could hold, could not now help manifesting themselves, seeing one just in their Circumstances, oppress'd with a Load of Guilt like them. After we had waited some Time, I desired the Person first affected to endeavour to compose her self, so that she might join with us in the Worship of GOD ; she strove for it with all her Power, till she became black in the Face, as those that sat by her declar'd ; but she could not help fetching some Groans now and then, so that all the Congregation could hear her. After this she had some *Discoveries* of CHRIST, and was something more comfortable ; but still full of Doubts and Fears ; it was a considerable Time before her Evidences of receiving CHRIST appear'd clear to her.

Since this we have *not had* any considerable crying out under *Conviction* in the publick Assembly during *Service-Time* ; but some have manifested great Distress after it has been over : Some have cry'd out in their own Houses when pondering on religious Things ; some in private Meetings ; and one *young Girl* particularly of *nine Years* of Age when at Play with her Consorts out of Doors, tho' no Body had spoken to her of religious Things that Day ; she fell down in great Distress, and said, “ it seem'd as if Hell lay before her, that she was ready to fall into it ” : The Wrath of GOD was dreadful to her. These Persons all declare with one Accord, that they could not possibly help it ; yea, one of them, if not more, have before their turn came, *faulted others* for it, and said, “ that they could help it if they would ”. I don't mention these Things because I lay any Stress upon bodily Emotions &c. It is the *Impression the Soul is under*, that I regard and am sway'd by. But I think it necessary that these Circumstances be related, in order to the giving a just Account. If any call this *Confusion*, I would to stop their Mouths declare further, that the *greater Part* that have been under Impressions at this Day among us have been wrought upon in a *silent Way* : But then those that *have cry'd out*, and those that *have not cry'd out* give the *same Account* of themselves ; and some of this latter Sort, have declared, that they don't wonder at others being in such an Agony and crying out in Distress, while under *Conviction* ; for if their own Concern had prevailed

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one Degree farther, all the World could not have kept them from the like Manifestations.

But what is it fills them with such Horror and Distress ? Why, they are convinced of their *dreadful State by Nature* ; they see themselves *perishing* and undone ; they *feel the Wrath of GOD abiding on them* : Hence they cry out with DAVID, *My Flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy righteous Judgments.* They are prick'd to the Heart with a Sense of *Sin* ; they are convinced that it is the *greatest Evil*, and dread it *more than Hell* : They cry out of their *Unbelief*, their *Pride*, their *Hypocrisy*, and the *Sin of their Nature* in the most melting Strains ; and nothing will content them but a CHRIST ; nothing will satisfy them but an Interest in CHRIST : and all this in such a Manner as it is impossible it should be feign'd ; many of them seem to go beyond themselves, and speak in such a moving Manner, as they were never capable of before. Oh how do they cry out of their former mispence of Time, their slighting of Sabbaths and Sermons, their contempt of good Men and good Company, their Frolicking, their Gaming, their Tavern-haunting, their love to the World, their averfeness to all that is Good, and all the Sins they have lived in ! And how are they fill'd with Wonder and Amazement that GOD hath let them alone thus long, that he hath not before this sent them to Hell, and broke them in the Place of Dragons ! And how fearful are they that he will suddenly cut the Thread of Life afunder, and send them to Hell before the Morning Light, or that he will take his HOLY SPIRIT from them, and seal them up to Perdition. This *I certainly know* to be the Case ; and I solemnly declare further, that in the whole Course of my Ministry I never heard any under *Convictions* speak so feelingly and sensibly as most have done in this present Day ; they indeed express the *same Things* for Substance that *others* have done formerly ; but they seem to be impress'd to a greater Degree, and to have more clear Discoveries of Sin and Hell &c. than they. Some few that were before *loose and scandalous* in their Lives have been under deep Convictions ; but the *greater Number* that have been the Subjects of this Work are such as did not appear openly *profane* ; several *moral Persons* and *Professors* have been dissettled from their Foundation.

When the Work came near us and began to prevail among us, I made it my Business in many Instances to trace back to the

the Fountain-Head the *evil* Reports that flew about as thick as Hail, where I had Opportunity. Some of them I found to be *wholly groundless*; others were *gross Misrepresentations*; the *bad* Circumstances of a Story were pick'd up and *related*, and the *good* all *suppress'd*; and sometimes when *one* only was guilty, the *whole* Body were charged: And when any particular Person had really said or done amiss, and was soon bro't to a Sense of it and to a Repentance for it, I found that the *Repentance* did not fly an hundredth Part so fast as the Sin: People did not appear so zealous to tell of this.

In short, Molehills were turned into Mountains; every *little* Indiscretion was *aggrandized* and render'd *monstrous*, and some Things that were innocent were strangely perverted and distorted, and made to appear in dreadful Colours. And when any have endeavoured to wipe off such Aspersions, and to declare the Truth from their own certain Knowledge, People were *shy* of hearing it; they seem'd loth to have the Report contradicted; by their Management it appear'd that they had rather it should be true than false. I could say a great deal here in order to set the Disingenuity of Men in a proper Light, but I must not be too lengthy. Only I think it necessary to observe further, that those that have been most opposite to this Reformation, have all along betray'd an *utter Aversion* to examine Things to the Bottom; they have from the Beginning avoided the Company and Conversation of such as have been *under Concern*, or of such as are *capable* of solving their Difficulties; yea, when urged over and over to go and discourse with the *young Converts*, and that not only with *one* or *two*, but with many of them, and examine thoroughly into their Case, they could not be prevailed with to do it, but still keep aloof: So that some that live in Places where this Reformation has been most prevalent, *know as little of it as if they had lived Scores of Miles off*. Is this a *rational* Way of acting? Are these the Men that so highly pretend to Reason? that laugh at every Body else as Fools? If this be Reason to judge of Things before they know them, may I for ever be delivered from Reason. It seems to me that those that talk most of *Reason* are generally the most *unreasonable*; as those that talk most of *free Will* are generally the most *wicked*. With these *reasonable Men* a Jest or Sneer or cunning Turn are sufficient to *baffle* the most authentic Accounts, and make them appear *ridiculous*.

(To be finished in our next.)